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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

1 October 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: [ ]  
Special Assistant to DD/NFA for Community Interests

FROM : Richard Lehman  
Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT : NIC Comments on Recommendations from SRP Post-Mortem  
on Soviet Brigade in Cuba

1. The following comments, keyed to numbered recommendations from the SRP's review of the Intelligence Community's performance regarding the Soviet brigade in Cuba, are offered for possible use in the first report by the DD/NFA to the DCI on where we stand in implementing those recommendations.

2. Recommendation 5: The NIC supports the idea of very carefully following the key question of Soviet goals, capabilities, and intentions vis-a-vis the Third World.

3. To the extent that available resources and existing commitments are permitting it, the NIC production plan for the current period (July 1980 through June 1981) does provide for producing several elements of a hierarchy of such papers. NFIB principals have received copies of this plan and commented on it, and the plan has been revised in light of these comments. On the military side, we anticipate producing major estimates by mid- or late-1981 on the Soviet capability to project power to distant areas [ ] and on Soviet naval policies and programs [ ]. On the foreign policy side, we plan a major estimate for early 1981 on central trends in Soviet foreign policy; an important part of that paper will be devoted to examining Moscow's strategy and capabilities in the Third World. Important "building block" papers that will be drawn upon in preparing this estimate will be the NIE now being considered by NFIB principals on US-Soviet competition in the northwest Indian Ocean area [ ] an estimate to be done later this year on the stability of Persian Gulf states; and an IIM begun in the same period on Soviet policies in Latin

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America. These papers share SRP's concern over Soviet policy re the Third World, and each of them will in turn use as "building blocks" a broader number of scheduled memoranda concerning the USSR and the Third World to be produced by the various NFAC production offices.

4. The foregoing notwithstanding, the above NIC papers may not in and of themselves comprise the kind of hierarchy of papers on Soviet aims in the Third World that the SRP may have in mind. We do feel, however, that they will constitute a realistic and significant step in that direction, considering existing gaps in our estimative analytical resources and the requirements we now and likely will face for producing both programmed and ad-hoc assessments on other subjects.

5. Recommendation 6: The NIC generally supports the concept of bringing to bear the full range of the Intelligence Community's analytical talent both in defining estimative tasks and in articulating responses to them, but doubts that SRP's specific recommendations in these respects are feasible or necessary.

6. As the SRP and NFIB are already aware, each estimative product (other than those done on a crash basis) normally begins, in effect, with an interagency "working group" meeting to discuss and refine a concept paper and terms of reference for the paper. Beyond that, many estimates are produced by apportioning drafting responsibilities for various sections among those agencies best equipped to write them. The most formal, elaborate division of labor for drafting an estimate is the system developed for producing the annual mammoth Soviet strategic capabilities assessment (NIE 11-3/8), but similar practices -- featuring the creation of interagency working groups to do each section -- are often followed in producing other complex estimates as well. Moreover, the NIC is now engaged in building its own interagency-derived analytical unit, the NIC Analytic Group, to draft most non-military or non-technical estimates. Aside from these measures, and given the multitude and variety of analytical tasks confronting the limited estimative resources of the Intelligence Community at any given time, we doubt it would be practical to attempt more than we are now doing to "...develop...a functional description of the Community resources and necessary working groups to sustain the analysis" on the hierarchy of papers envisioned in the previous recommendation.

7. Recommendation 7: The NIC fully agrees that a developmental history of each estimative project ought to be produced.

8. Most if not all NIOs now maintain "development files" on each estimate produced under their aegis, and the NIC Chairman has reminded all NIOs that such files need to be maintained and that they should include written accounts

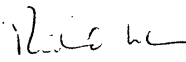
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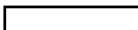
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of specific questions or approaches considered but discarded during the course of putting the paper together and the reasons for it. We agree that these files can be valuable methodological adjuncts to the judgments of estimates themselves, to subsequent efforts to test or examine the validity of such judgments, and to decisions on whether to update or revise estimates.

9. The NIC does not agree, however, that it is necessary to provide a separate analytic annex as a supporting document for each NIE. It already is NIC policy that the underlying arguments and analytical rationale for the key judgments of an estimate be explicitly stated within the estimate itself. The NIC agrees that in those cases where there is ambiguity and a lack of analytical substantiation of matters key to the paper, an annex is appropriate and should be done.

10. Recommendation 8: The NIC supports the Panel's suggestion that an ex post facto review of certain estimates should be undertaken. It sees no intrinsic utility in requiring an automatic, formal review of all estimative products but agrees that greater use of the post-mortem device could represent a valuable tool in efforts to improve the quality of our estimative work over the long run. The device is already used within the NIC to some extent -- reviews of the annual versions of NIE 11-3/8 again providing the most obvious examples -- but we agree that it needs to be used more often. We do have some reservations about whether formal machinery and procedures need to be invoked in each instance where a review is conducted; in some instances it probably would be better simply to reconvene the Intelligence Community representatives who participated in producing the original paper, doing so at a suitable time after the estimate's publication, to discuss lessons learned, gaps in its coverage, and pitfalls to be avoided in the future. The NIC intends to establish the principle that each NIE and SNIE that it produces will receive such a review unless the NIC Chairman agrees that it should not be done.

  
Richard Lehman

 Oct80  
cc: C/NIC  
AC/NIC  
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